



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

The Research Paper on “A Critical study of Ruskin Bond’s Woman Characters.”

Niloy Chakraborty, Research Scholar

Tripura University, Agartala, India

Abstract:

“Many years ago, a well-intentioned critic observed that my stories were not, technically speaking, short stories, as they were plot-less, lacking in formal structure. In those days everything—play, film, and short story—had to have a ‘plot’, even if life itself was totally devoid of one. My critic did, however, concede that my stories were really character sketches, or portraits of people he had known, and in this he was right.” The above comments made by Ruskin Bond about his short stories, and this paper is going to analyse that there is indeed a formal structure in Bond’s stories from the perspective of his characterisation of Woman characters of selective works. Further, this paper will also try to put light on the genuine findings that his women characters are more flamboyant than in reality.

Keywords: Ruskin Bond, Characterisation, Plot etc.

Introduction:

Ruskin Bond is considered one of the greatest among the Indian authors in short story genre. He was born and brought up in India, a boy who has witnessed the Independence and suddenly face the nationality crisis and settled in the lap of Himalayas in Mussoorie, just because of his love for this country. He has a great contribution in the development of Children’s literature in India with his magnanimous collection of short stories, novels, periodicals, articles and poems. He had received many awards such as—John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1957, the Sahitya Academy Award in the year 1992, Padma Shri in 1999 and Padma Bhusan in 2014.

Here in this paper my focus is on the Woman characterisation in selective writings of Ruskin Bond. The name of the stories are listed below—

- The Woman on Platform 8
- The Coral Tree
- The Photograph
- The Window

Discussion:

Bond's narrative style is simple; there are no complexities in his plots. The characters in most of his short stories are easy going and true to reality. He narrates the story of a common citizen. Here in this paper the chief focus is on woman characters and how they portrayed in Bond's writings. If we read minutely, we can find that all the woman characters have some commonality—they are simple, have a great patience, and have a great personality. Bond always shows sincerity in depicting the woman characters, he found them extraordinary and devour with simplicity. All the characters are equally powerful, sweet and close to reality. He never exaggerated his woman characters—interestingly the innocence of love which binds these characters with other characters. If we look into *Woman on Platform no 8*, he describes the woman character as "...and I saw a pale face, and dark kind eyes. She wore no jewels, and was dressed very simple in a white sari". In this story Arun, the protagonist, was waiting for his train at a railway station. He was just twelve years old and love to travel alone. Another interesting feature about his women characters is the Indian-ness. They are from any common background maybe a village woman, a school going girl, a vendor seller, or a girl who sells flowers. This is also very true when Arun said, "I also liked her for the simplicity of her dress, and for her deep, soft voice and the serenity of her face." There are many reasons why Arun likes her, as we can see that this is completely unexpected for Arun to meet her in such an untimely hour of midnight. She is a complete stranger to him but she invited him for dinner and this way we see a clear reflection of tenderness. We also witnessed the genuine generosity of her when a boy leapt off the platform and ran across the rails. She felt fear and showed her concern when Arun exclaimed, "Her fingers dug into my flesh, and I winced with pain. I caught her fingers and looked up at her, and I saw a spasm of pain and fear and sadness pass across her face." She was always with him and when they met with Satish's mother, and she inquired about the woman, she said that "I am Arun's mother." Here we see the affection and firm determination in her voice that a mother has. At the end, we moved with the farewell and a sort of sadness when Arun explained, "She stood there on the busy platform, a pale sweet woman in white, and I watched her until she was lost in the milling crowd." The separation left the readers with pain, and also it is repeatedly echoed by Arun's last words "good bye—mother...".

Readers can easily differentiate a girl from a woman when they go through Bond's stories. The next story, *The Coral Tree* deals with the innocence of a girl. Bond introduces the character as—"A girl was standing in the verandah porch, looking at me very seriously. When I saw her, I sat up in bed with a start. She was a small, dark girl, her eyes big and black, her pigtailed tied up in a bright red ribbon; and she was fresh and clean like the rain and the red earth." Here he actually means the softness of the character. The adjectives 'fresh', 'clean', 'red', all are metaphorical, which is a clear indication of an Indian girl with her caring nature and loftiness. The writer is in his twenties in this story and about to shift to England. The characterisation of this girl's character is very unique and sheds a glimpse of woman empowerment when she replied to the question with certain firmness in her tone—"Yes. But I can stay on my own." This is also continued when she said—"I want to go everywhere...to America and Africa and Japan and Honolulu." This freedom to speak and express the view of a girl/ woman is very common in Bond's works. They feel much free in Bond's narrative than in reality. The story starts with a monologue about the writer's current situation. It has some autobiographical note as the writer is waiting for the next morning when he is going to good bye this country. And he was busy in his own thought about his further life of struggle—the work, interviews, job, different place and different kind of people. The character introduced at this moment of separation to lighten up the pain. The girl brings with her the morning freshness. The innocence of the girl helps the writer to forget the pain of farewell for sometimes. When the writer wanted to know of her coming, she replied innocently—"I want some flowers but I can't reach them." This story shows us an unmatched friendship of an Adult with a teenage girl. The girl reflects the true sense of simplicity by expressing her views about her best friend Cook, as she said, "The cook. He lets me stay in the kitchen, which is more interesting than the house. And I like to watch him cooking. And he gives me things to eat, and tells me stories..." The girl is very true from her heart as she told the writer, "I'll make you the second best." This is a very delighted moment for the readers who sailed from her freshness to innocence. At the end, when they both waved to each other, the girl was still holding the flowers which the writer helped to collect. Here the girl's character got the final touch when the writer said—"In the girl's hand was a sprig of coral blossom. As she waved, the blossoms fell apart and danced lightly in the breeze." Here the girl becomes a woman by showing her emotion without being concern about the flowers.

In the third story *A Photograph*, Bond is trying to express the unsaid emotion of his woman character. *A Photograph* is quite different from the above two stories, by its treatment. It has some nostalgic taste, where a grandson found a photograph of his grandmother in her adolescence. Bond introduces the grandmother quite

poetically—“She was very old, dressed in a plain white sari; her eyes were not very strong now, but her fingers moved quickly with the needles, and the needles kept clicking all afternoon. Grandmother had white hair, but there were very few wrinkles on her skin.” Bond doesn’t make any hurry while describing his characters, same as with the character of Grandmother. If we look the statement more carefully we can observe that the author became emotional while introducing her. This may be because Bond himself spent a good amount of time with his grandmother, and close to her. It is always unexpected for us to see the favourite person becoming old, same as with the author, as he said, “...but there were very few wrinkles on her skin”. We generally don’t accept this common phenomenon. The Grandmother’s character reminded us about our good old days. Here in this story a ten years old boy found a picture of a girl from a book. He was excited and quite sure about the picture i.e. it must be his grandmother’s. But when he had shown the picture to her, she was just trying to ignore to recognise it and commented that “...but she was a very wicked girl and I shouldn’t tell you about her.” On the otherhand, Bond describe the girl on the photograph as—“The girl had long, loose hair, and she wore a long dress that nearly covered her ankles, and sleeves that reached her wrists, and there were a lot of bangles on her hands; but, despite all this drapery, the girl appeared to be full of freedom and movement; she stood with her legs apart and her hands on her hips, and she has a wide, almost devilish smile on her face.” After seeing this picture grandmother felt nostalgic about her childhood days. This is the beauty of a photograph that it helps us to dive deep into the memory lane. Further the boy pointed out that on the wall behind her somebody’s hands were there. The Grandmother exclaimed that “It’s the first time I noticed.” Every single individual has their own story, and memories related to that story, here we witnessing a transition of emotion on Grandmother’s face when she literally started to think whose hands they were. The story is not a story of a grandmother and her grandson. Moreover, it teases many incidents of her life throughout her journey from Adolescence to Old age.

The next story is at some point true to every individual. The Window, tells us about the temporality of our emotion. In this story reader will enjoy the roller-coaster of emotion. It is a story of a boy who made the roof as his room. He enjoys the world from his only window as he said, “...but my room owned the roof. And from the window of my room I owned the world.” The boy is undoubtedly the protagonist of the story he is happy in his own being and describes his detached life from his window. Then one day Koki, the woman protagonist came into the scene and they build up a good friendship. It is new actually to him in his complete isolated life. He describes Koki as, “She had long black hair that fell to her waist, tied with a single red ribbon: her eyes were black like her hair and just as shiny. She must have been about ten or eleven years old.” One thing is very clear from this study that Bond’s woman characters are not fair enough by their skin colour, they have their own beauty a magnificent dark-complexion. Koki is also no different; he invited her and wanted to show her the world from his window. Like all the other woman characters, this girl also has the same simplicity and a certain charisma in her personality. She is like a morning shower to him as she brought colour to his life when they planned to create a garden on the roof and make his life to movement outside the window. She is more supportive and by her own spell she made him feel life once again.

Conclusion—

This paper is trying to figure out the importance of woman characters in Bond’s writings. More precisely, how the ordinary characters of a woman as a mother of Arun, the teenage girl, the grandmother, and Koki a small girl become extraordinary with their patience, feelings, caring and lovely nature. All these character are not larger than life, they are very common in our day-to-day lives but the way Ruskin Bond describe them is quite impressive. The characters become the mouth of thousand women who are oppressed by the society. That’s why these characters are more flamboyant to express their emotions; which is rare even in today’s society. The way Bond shows their courage to ask questions, their exuberance, ready to handle any situation is really appreciable. A writer must narrate his story in a way that connects to the heart, and Bond’s beautiful characterisation make such statement comes true.

References—

1. Aggarwal, Amita. *Fictional World of Ruskin Bond*. Sarup & Sons, 2005. Print.
2. Bond, Ruskin. *The Night Train at Deoli and Other Stories*. New Delhi: Penguin Books Pvt. Ltd. 1988. Print.
3. Bond, Ruskin. *The Best of Ruskin Bond*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, India. 1994. Print.
4. Heyman, Michael. *The Life and Works of Ruskin Bond*. Children's Literature Association Quarterly, vol. 28, 2009, pp. 253-254.
5. Sinha, M., Jauhari, R. and Dave, N. *Ruskin Bond: A Critical Evaluation*. 1st ed. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers. 2012. pp 156.

